

DOUBLE CLICK

A Monthly Publication of Macintosh Users East (MaUse)



Wreck a Nice Beach & ramBunctious



Think different.

MaUse
Macintosh Users East



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Double Click

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From the Editor



This Month's topics are Speech Recognition in the Mac OS and ramBunctious...a pair of programs to enhance the

way you use your Mac. Unfortunately the Speech Recognition won't work on my old 68k Macs but it works just fine on Irma's 75 Mhz PPC Performa. ramBunctious works on everything, and if you read the article you will find plenty of reasons to use it. Don't forget the Shareware fee if you do, though. The Mac OS could still use a few improvements in memory management, and beyond the obvious, (like a Hard Drive de-fragger and a scan-disk utility), better Virtual Memory and RAM disk capabilities could make our Macs even more versatile.

The Double Click is published on an antique but wickedly fast Macintosh IIfx by & for members of the Macintosh Users East, (MaUsE), and this is the Hallowe'en Issue. Contributions on any topic relating to Macintosh or Apple computing from club members are welcome. Extremely welcome. In any format.

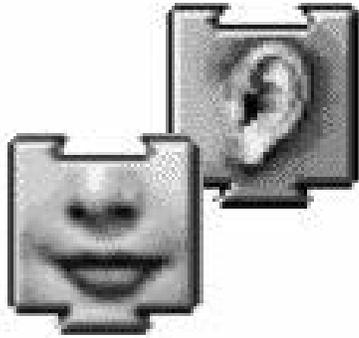
Don't forget to get out for the October meeting. See the notice on Page 10 for all the gory details.



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Talking to Your Mac



the back it said, "I Helped Apple Recognise Speech".



You don't have to be a Star Trek fan to know that the computer of the future will talk, listen and understand.

That computer of the future is the Apple Macintosh of today. Apple's Speech Recognition and Speech Synthesis Technologies now give speech-savvy applications the power to carry out your voice commands, and even speak back to you in plain English, (and now, Spanish). Speech recognition can mean any one of three very distinct activities : the ability to hear and transcribe the spoken word, like a stenographer, the ability to hear and respond to spoken commands, like a robot, and the ability to read text aloud. There are commercial programs to allow you to do the first of these and in this article we will examine the other two kinds, the ones that come as part of the Macintosh OS. The hardware requirements for Speech recognition are simply a PlainTalk microphone and any AV or Power Mac with system 7.5 or better installed. Of course the faster the PPC processor and the more RAM you have installed the better because using PlainTalk Speech Recognition software can slow your system somewhat. PlainTalk is a collection of software programs like MacinTalk Pro and Speech Manager that let your Macintosh speak written text and and other software that will help your Mac respond to spoken commands. The newest version, PlainTalk 1.5.4 includes English Text-to-Speech, Mexican Spanish Text-to-Speech, and English Speech Recognition. The PlainTalk software can be downloaded free from Apple's PlainTalk Website at <http://speech.apple.com>.

Speech Recognition

There are two ways to access the Speech Recognition software in your Mac. One way is to leave it on all the time and have your Mac sensitive to some specific spoken word or phrase that will get its attention and evoke a response. The other way is to preset your Mac to pay attention to



incoming speech only when a specific key combination is held down. The latter method requires that you be at your keyboard in order to have verbal input but it uses less memory than the other method and radically reduces the possibility of your Mac misinterpreting something it hears while eavesdropping on your conversations and translating it as a command to initiate some action you are unaware of. With a Power Macintosh using Apple Speech Recognition, you can ask "What time is it?" and hear if you're late for dinner. You can open your spreadsheet by saying "Open the February forecast." Or use voice command to control your starship in a game. With the program comes a list of what Apple feels are common commands that you will frequently find useful (see list next page) and one of them is a "Make Speakable" command which allows you to customise the commands you give your Mac to make "speakable" the programs that you might have in order to make them openable, closable and quitable. Besides customising what commands your Mac can identify and



Add this to Favorites folder
Add this to the Apple Menu
Change view to list
Change view to pop up
Close all windows
Close this window
Eject this
Empty the trash
Find by content
Find original of this
Make this speakable
Move this to the trash
Open File Sharing
Open Speech Introduction
Open the Chooser
Open the Speakable Items folder
Open the Speech control panel
Put computer to sleep
Put this away
Quit this application
Show me what to say
Shut down the computer
Sort window by name
Switch to Next Application
Tell me a joke
Turn Speakable Items off

respond to the program allows you to decide from a crowd of characters what persona will represent your Mac when it answers back to you, and which of the twenty-six voices it will reply in and how the voice will sound with speed and pitch modifications. The possibilities are as limitless as the human imagination. Apple Speech Recognition lets your Macintosh understand what you say, giving you a new dimension for interacting with and controlling your computer by voice. You don't even have to train it to understand your voice, because it already understands you, from your very first word. The software will understand all the commands listed above and more that you create with the "Make Speakable" command. Unlike your children, it doesn't have to be yelled at to get it's attention, either. You can

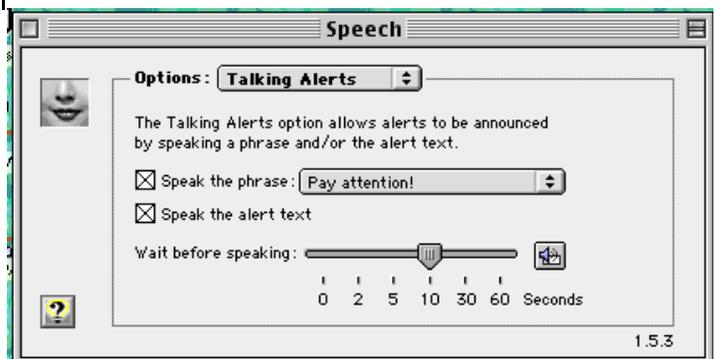
speak naturally, without pausing or stopping, and even add your own words (like "Denibian Slime Devil," if you're a trekkie). Apple's leadership in speech recognition technology makes it possible. Apple is bringing a whole new dimension to the user interface: speech.



There are three components with which you interact with the Speakable Items utility: the Speech control panel, the feedback window, and the Speakable Items folder. You use the Speech control panel to turn Speakable Items on and off, and to specify how the computer listens and how it gives you feedback. You use the feedback window to check whether the computer is listening and how it has responded to your command. The feedback window is open whenever Speakable Items is turned on. The Speakable Items folder in the Apple menu contains all the items whose names the computer can recognise. When you say the name of an item in this folder, the compute acts as if you double-clicked its icon. You can add to or delete the items in this folder, or change their names. For instructions on using Speakable Items, search on the term "Speakable Items" in Mac OS

English Text-To-Speech

English Text-to-Speech (also known as Speech Synthesis) converts text to spoken words. Just imagine having this copy of Double Click or any other page on your screen read aloud to you, or having information on your Macintosh read to you over the phone! These, and more, applications are now possible with the PlainTalk speech synthesis technology that you may already have in your Macintosh.

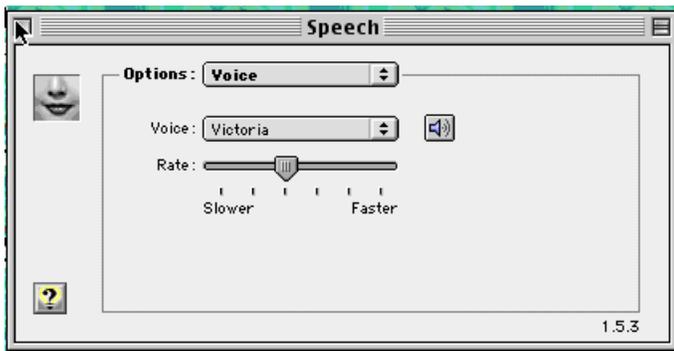


Mexican Spanish Text-to-Speech

Mexican Spanish Text-to-Speech offers all the features and advantages of English Text-to-Speech, but in Spanish, with an authentic south-of-the-border accent. Improve your Spanish with applications incorporating this muy caliente technology. This software is reputed to be so fluent that it is now possible to learn Spanish from your Mac.

Text-to-Speech features

Have your computer speak the alert messages that appear on the screen. 26 different voices to choose from, (only 18 voice choices in OS 7.5) including 4 specifically designed for Mexican Spanish Text-to-Speech. The latest version of Mac OS includes all the software you'll need to start using Speech Recognition and Text-to-Speech. If the version of Mac OS you're using doesn't include Speech software, you can download it and give it a try.



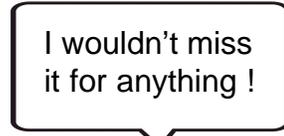
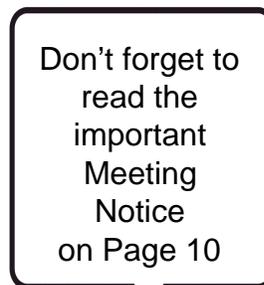
If you run out of memory while using speech recognition



If you see a message that Speech Recognition is having trouble due to lack of memory, save all your open documents and quit the application programs you have open.

Use the Speech control panel to choose a voice that requires less memory, or turn off voice feedback altogether. The voices with "high quality" in their names use the most memory. "Fred" uses the least. To see how much memory a voice needs, look at the size of the voice files in the Voices folder in the

Extensions folder. Use the Memory control panel to turn on virtual memory. (With virtual memory on, voices may be slightly distorted and, with some programs, speech performance may decrease.) Install more memory in your computer. If you are using System 8.5 or later on a Power Macintosh with English Text-to-Speech and English Speech Recognition installed, then it is recommended that your computer have at least 32 megabytes of RAM. A few applications may interfere with Speech Recognition. For example, Speech Recognition may not work with programs that use the microphone themselves, such as software that lets you record and edit sound. Turn off Speakable Items and any other Speech Recognition applications that you may be running when using these programs. If the computer isn't recognising your commands correctly when you are using your computer's built-in microphone, it may not have sufficient audio quality to work well with Apple's Speech Recognition software. This is most likely to happen on computers where the monitor, microphone, and computer are combined, and is more problematic on the iMac because of the noise coming from the internal fan. If you are experiencing problems with the accuracy of Speech Recognition, you should try connecting an Apple PlainTalk microphone to your computer. That's the microphone that comes with all Power Macintosh computers. The round, earlier type of Microphone will not work with newer Macs. If you consistently experience problems in recognising a particular Speakable Item (in the Speakable Items folder), try renaming the item. The way in which individuals pronounce and emphasise certain words can affect recognition accuracy.





ramBunctious

Mac OS Memory Control Panel or none at all, you are in for a very pleasant surprise. And if you have only ever used the RAM Disks you have created to be used as a self-emptying trash-can for your Netscape cache, you should be made aware that that you have been neglecting the best memory manipulating capabilities of your Macintosh Computer.



Creating RAM Disks is, like the name implies, basically like taking some of your Dynamic RAM, (the SIMMs or DIMMs you have installed in your Macintosh), and using it as a temporary Hard Drive, or Static RAM space. Think of it as the opposite to the activity performed when you use Connectix RamDoubler or Apple's Virtual Memory from the Mac OS Memory Control Panel. With these programs you can temporarily use SRAM, or static RAM on your Hard Drive as if it were Dynamic RAM in order to open larger programs or more programs than you would otherwise be able to. Unfortunately, the time your Mac takes to access static RAM on

If your only previous experience of creating and using RAM Disks is, like that of many other Mac users, limited to either the RAM Disk option in the

your Hard Drive is a hundreds times greater than the time your Mac takes to access the dynamic RAM in your SIMMs or DIMMs, so Virtual Memory will slow your Mac somewhat. The much faster relative access speed of DRAM over SRAM is what gives RAM Disks their benefit. In effect, when you create a storage RAM Disk out of a quantity of your dynamic memory you are creating a little mini-Hard Drive that your Mac can access just like any floppy disk or other drive connected to your Mac but a hundred times faster. The disk you create as a RAM disk can be treated like any other disk, even though it only exists in RAM. You can change its name, double-click it to open it, drag things onto it, drag things off it. The memory tied up making the RAM Disk will be added to your System RAM allocation.

Because of the severe limitations of the RAM Disk management capabilities of the Mac OS there are several programs that have been written to enhance this feature, like ramBunctious, RamDisk+, AppDisk, FasterApp and ShrinkWrap. Some of these do other things as well as create RAM Disks and each has unique features. Of these, ramBunctious 1.3.1 is fast

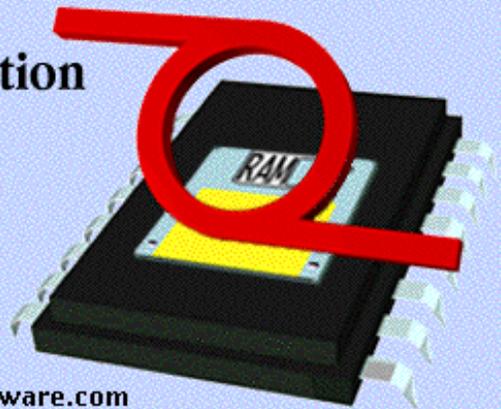
ramBunctious

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The RAM Disk Application
Version 1.3.1

Clarkwood Software

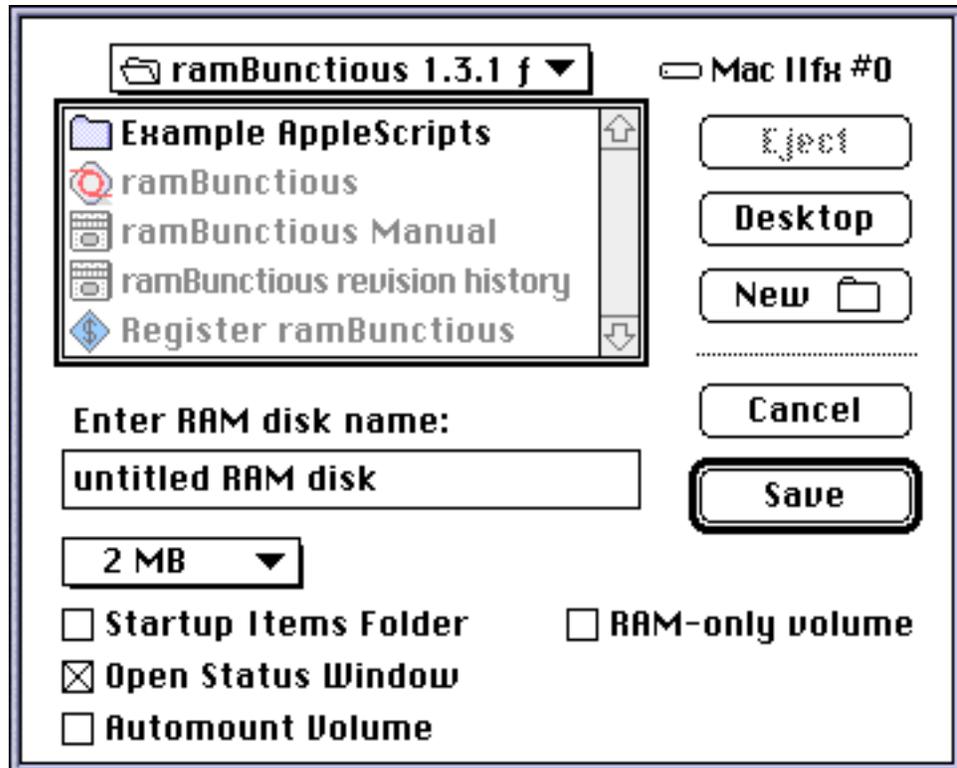
E-mail: rambunctious@clarkwoodsoftware.com
Web: <http://www.clarkwoodsoftware.com/rambunctious/>



becoming my choice for many reasons. It retains the ease of use advantages of the Mac OS and adds to this many more capabilities and useful features, some of which really should be part of the Macintosh Operating System. Beyond the basics ramBunctious lets you customise your RAM Disks for greater speed, security, safety, and versatility. It allows you to create multiple RAM Disks each with its own preferences, as many as you have memory for, and since ramBunctious uses the same memory that your applications use the memory set aside for each RAM Disk is instantly available for your other apps as soon as the RAM Disk is put away, or "unmounted". Even more importantly you can set preferences for each RAM Disk individually in its Settings window to enable or force it to write through to your Hard Drive at specified intervals to ensure that the files and information in your RAM Disk are also securely saved to your Hard Drive or floppy drive as a "disk image file" in order to save a copy case of a freeze or crash. When you recover and Restart you can retrieve your RAM Disk contents and carry on. The RAM Disk option in your Mac OS Memory Control Panel cannot be set to do this for you.

To use ramBunctious 1.3.1 you must download it from the Internet and copy it to your Hard Drive. There is no Installer, per se. Double-Click the application icon and select New RAM Disk from the simple File menu. In the dialog box that appears you will set the information required to create your first RAM Disk. It will need a name and a size. Several sizes are

suggested in the pop-up menu and selecting "Other" from the list of offerings will enable you to create a RAM Disk of any size not listed. If StartUp Items Folder is selected your new RAM Disk will have a StartUp Items Folder on it just like the one in your System Folder. Aliases, documents or applications placed in it will be launched automatically when the RAM Disk is mounted. Automount



Volume will, if checked, put an alias of the RAM Disk into the StartUp Items folder in your active System Folder and cause the RAM Disk to be mounted when your Mac starts up. For each RAM Disk you create you will have a different Settings window and each can be configured differently.



The important features of the fairly simple File menu, as shown on Page 8, are the New RAM Disk item, which calls up the window shown above, the Register item, which will invite you to pay the \$12.00 Shareware fee for ramBunctious and the Save item, which performs an immediate write through for the active or front RAM Disk, if

File	
New RAM Disk...	⌘ N
Open...	⌘ O
Close	⌘ W
Save	⌘ S
Put Away	⌘ Y
Register	⌘ R
Quit	⌘ Q

you have more than one mounted. The Open command allows you to navigate to and select a RAM disk image file: the selected RAM disk is mounted and available for normal usage. Put Away unmounts the active RAM Disk, unless it has open files on it and also gives a list of all mounted RAM Disks with a check mark beside the name of the one whose window is open.



ramBunctious is the perfect compliment to the Mac with lots of memory and big applications installed. Allocating memory in the Get Info widow will speed up any application a bit but if it then relies on retrieval of files that are on your hard Drive performance will suffer when access to the Hard Drive is required. Having the files you need and intend to use saved in DRAM in a RAM Disk can visibly reduce access time and speed up document retrieval.

What can ramBunctious do that your Mac OS can't do?

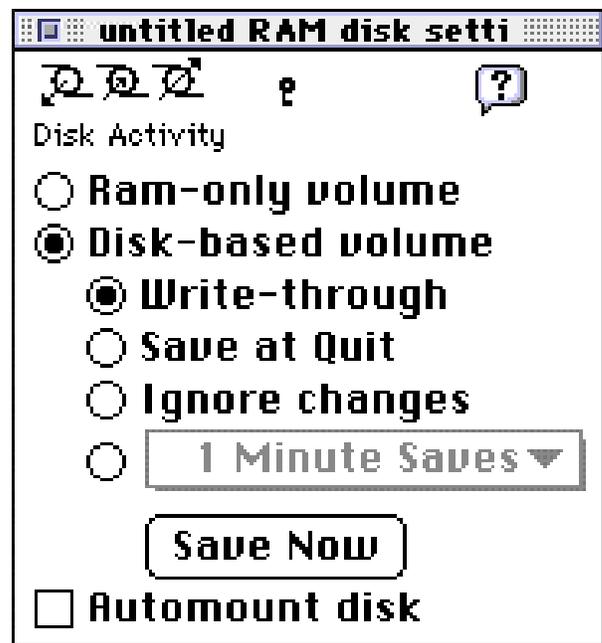
1. Create *multiple* RAM Disks, each with its own settings window and unique features.
2. Write through to Disk Image File, if you select this option. Everything written to the

RAM Disk will be saved. The next time you mount the RAM Disk the info will be retrieved .

3. As soon as you are finished with a RAM Disk its allotted memory is *instantly* made available for other applications, so you don't have to reboot your Mac to reclaim the SRAM used in the RAM Disk.

4. StartUp Folder on the RAM Disk enables you to have programs or documents automatically launched when your RAM Disk mounts.

Besides controlling the behaviour of its RAM Disk the Settings Window provides visual clues to the RAM Disk's responses with indicators in the upper left corner that flicker and change to reflect activity during reading from and writing to or through the RAM Disk. The indicators also tell the status of the write through to disk image file and reflects the status of the backup process. If RAM-Only Volume is selected, the info on the RAM Disk dies with it: unmounting the disk erases it. Disk-Based Volume specifies that a disk image file on the Hard Drive holds an updated duplicate of the info & files on the RAM Disk.



Write-Through gives the command to write onto the disk file image at the same time as the RAM Disk is being written to, to ensure that a second copy of work contained in the RAM Disk is kept safely separate and update regularly. The Save at Quit command is pretty straightforward. With this selected all changes to the RAM Disk are remembered when the RAM Disk is unmounted and are incorporated into the RAM Disk the next time it is mounted. Ignore Changes does the opposite. No changes are saved and all files return to their previous unaltered state when the RAM Disk gets remounted. The X Minute Saves allows you to specify the time interval between updates to the disk image file and will also save all changes automatically when the RAM Disk is unmounted. The Save Now button can be used any time to update the disk image file. The Automount Disk box, if selected, puts an alias of the RAM Disk into the StartUp Items folder of the active System folder so the RAM Disk will mount at StartUp.

the program can be downloaded but if you are running the latest Mac operating system make sure you get the newest version of this program, ramBunctious 1.3.1. Unlike many other Shareware programs that have features that can only be unlocked by a purchased code this program is fully functional as delivered and also has no annoying pop-up Shareware reminders .

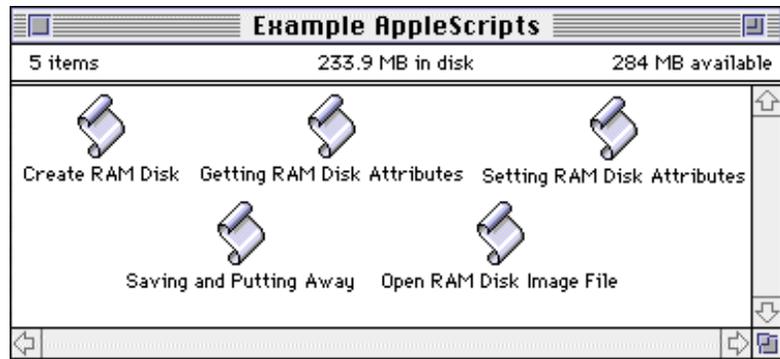


So far ramBunctious 1.3.1 appears to be very stable, cooperates with others well, and runs in very little

RAM. On my Mac IIfx I have given it 400k under System 7.6.1 with 32 Megs installed and it runs in less than 100k.



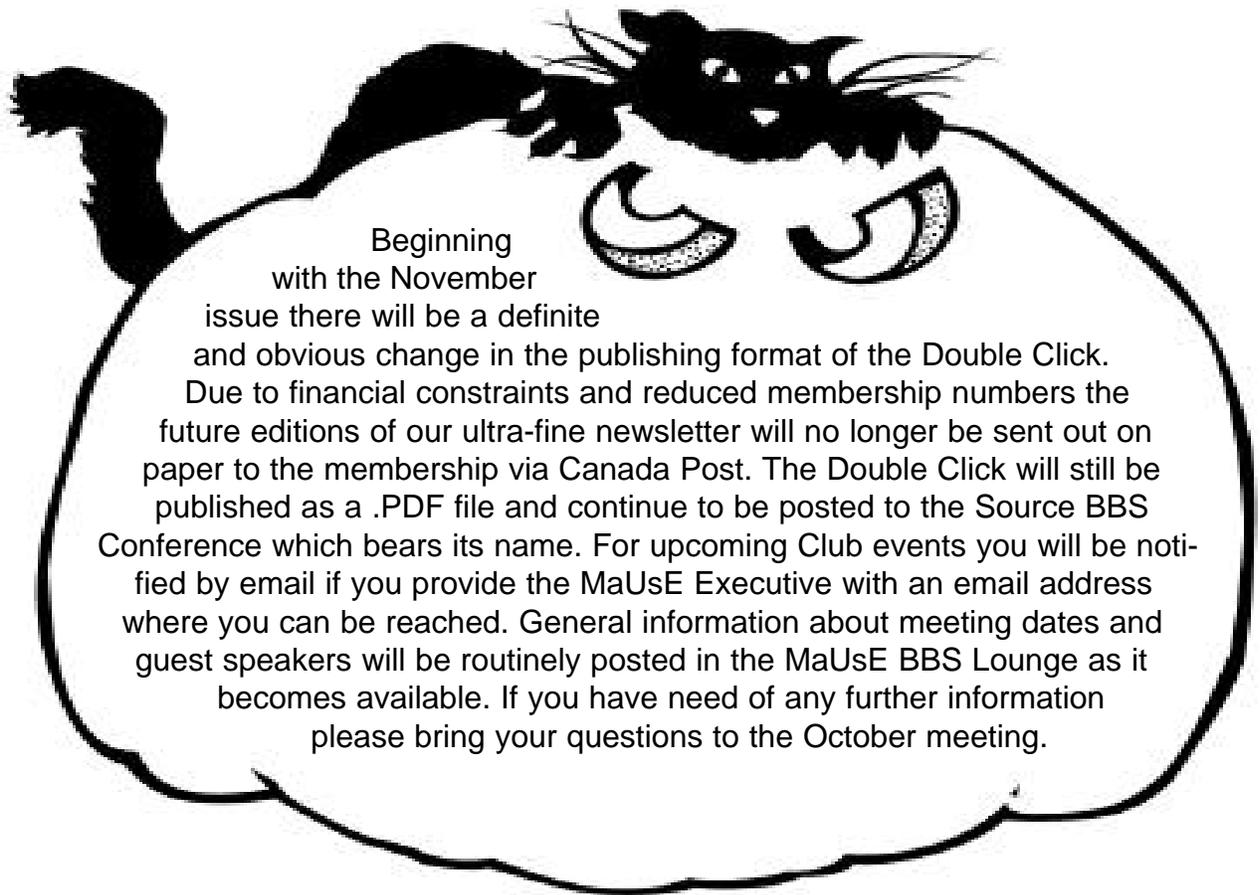
ramBunctious is fully scriptable and comes with a small folder of AppleScripts when you download it. It is a very small compressed file (approx 250k) from <www.clarkwoodsoftware.com> and has a very modest Shareware fee. A search on the Internet for ramBunctious will take you to several sites from which



Component	Memory Reserved
ramBunctious	400K
System Software	4,926K

memory reserved for the program listed to the left. The dark part of the bar shows how much memory the program is using.

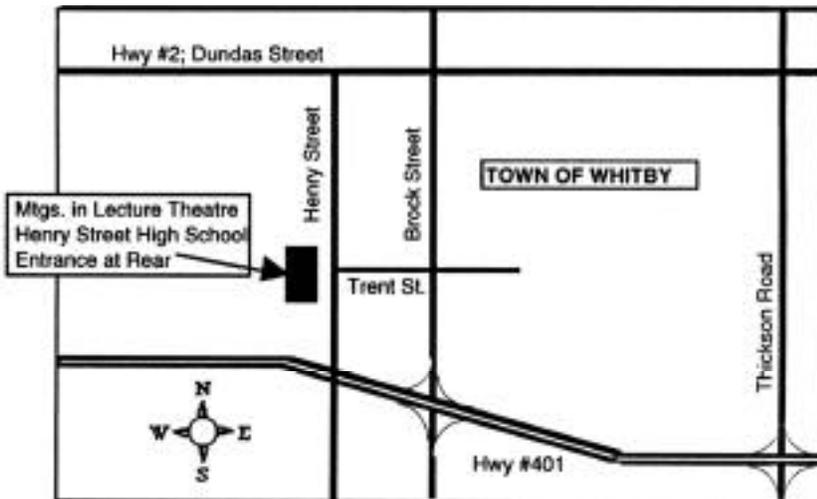
This program is currently using 74K out of the 400K reserved for it.



Beginning with the November issue there will be a definite and obvious change in the publishing format of the Double Click. Due to financial constraints and reduced membership numbers the future editions of our ultra-fine newsletter will no longer be sent out on paper to the membership via Canada Post. The Double Click will still be published as a .PDF file and continue to be posted to the Source BBS Conference which bears its name. For upcoming Club events you will be notified by email if you provide the MaUse Executive with an email address where you can be reached. General information about meeting dates and guest speakers will be routinely posted in the MaUse BBS Lounge as it becomes available. If you have need of any further information please bring your questions to the October meeting.

Hallowe'en Meeting on Wednesday, October 27th

The topic will probably be the Autumn Apple hardware, focussing on the new iBook and / or the G4 Desktop models. For more info visit The Source BBS.



7:30 P.M. at Henry Street High School, on Henry Street South in Whitby, Ontario.

